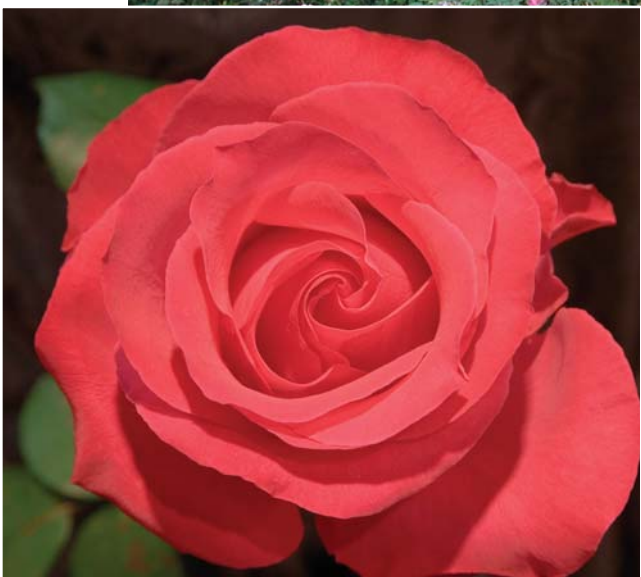




A Tale of Two Gardens

Marilyn Wellan

My entry into a glorious life with roses was delayed by the raising of four daughters and making a living, and other pursuits of the heart, mind, and purse. But memories of a gorgeous yellow Rambler that engulfed a fence at my childhood home and of rosebud corsages for recitals and proms reminded me I needed roses in my life. Who knows how much more I would know about the world of roses if I had gone right to the business of growing them on reaching the age of maturity!



Country Garden

My love affair with roses finally blossomed in the early 1980s when my husband Myron and I moved from the city to the country to “the most beautiful piece of land in Louisiana.” There were hills with tall pines and lowlands with cypress trees. Water roared over natural rock formations when it rained, and we could hear the sound from our back porch. Our home was built alongside a bayou and nearby there was a swamp. I set out to be a rose grower and to landscape the entire acreage with roses.

My first little patch of roses, which was not a “garden” by any stretch of the imagination, was planted with a collection of Jackson and Perkins’ “Roses of the Year.” I added a variety labeled WHITE AMERICAN BEAUTY, which quickly grew beyond its allotted space. Research proved she had another name—FRAU KARL DRUSCHKI. The FRAU was eventually given an arbor to grow on where she thrived. That was the beginning of my conversion to heritage roses.

As my interest and love for old roses grew, so did my collection. The roses that thrive in our zone include Species, Chinas, Teas, Bourbons, Noisettes, Hybrid Musks, and Polyanthas. I wanted to own them all, thinking that if I spread roses all around the property, long after I am gone rose rustlers may come upon a

PHOTOS ON PREVIOUS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Seven Sisters; Alice Hamilton and Louis Philippe; the Marilyn Wellan Rose. All photos by Marilyn Wellan except where otherwise noted.





Rambler or a Species rose and will know a dedicated rosarian once lived there. I stopped adding bushes at around 600.

Memories were made by SEVEN SISTERS, which grew across our 40-foot-wide front porch. Memories returned when we identified with near certainty the yellow Rambler of my childhood as GOLDFINCH and planted it on a fence near our barn.

With plenty of land available for planting, we were able to enjoy large Species and other Climbers in this our country garden. The Cherokee Rose, *R. laevigata*, grew 30 to 40 feet into an oak, dragging the tree branches downward as the rose climbed higher and higher. No Southern lady should be without at least one Banksia rose. I grew three very large specimens of both the yellow and white species. I also grew several bushes of *R. roxburghii*, the Chestnut Rose. A vigorous NEW DAWN Climber intertwined with one of them, and which rose will win over the space remains to be seen. I grew *R. fortuniana* as a specimen plant in the front yard. It bloomed at the same time as the spirea and an adjacent Grancy Graybeard tree (*chionanthus virginicus*), creating an unplanned but spectacular white garden in late winter.

LEFT: "Petite Pink Scotch". ABOVE: *Rosa banksia banksiae*.



Besides the old roses, our country garden featured many modern varieties. For a number of years, I collected the hot new Hybrid Tea varieties on *Fortuniana* understock and enjoyed some level of success in exhibiting them. The emerging and increasingly popular Shrub roses later became an important part of the country collection.

City Garden

There came a day in 2005 when Myron and I decided we had experienced enough of life in the country. I was smitten with the idea of living in town once again and knew I would enjoy the challenge of creating a new home and rose garden. After 16 years of volunteer rose work, climaxing last October with the end of my term as president of the American Rose Society, my rose garden would at last have the attention I wanted to give it.

We built our city house during the last year of my presidency and moved in March 2006. Our new neighbors remarked that it was the first time they had

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Gartendirektor Otto Linne, Seven Sisters, Japanese Iris; Étoile de Lyon (photo by Barbara Worl); Roses on the country garden drive.

seen a garden completed before the house was finished. We moved many large bushes from the country garden before the dormant season ended, and they provided a near mature garden almost overnight.

While the country garden was developed by adding roses here and there over a 24-year span, the new garden is planted in a series of garden rooms. Roses surround the lawn areas and are grouped by class, providing a horticultural lesson for me and my visitors. The first garden room off the living room terrace is the “Van Gogh Garden,” so called because of a large terracotta bust of the artist which stands opposite the living room doors. In it are flowers the artist would have loved, including Japanese iris, agapanthus, stokesia and other blue flowers, as well as white roses, lilies, plumbago, and dahlias.





The second garden room is surrounded on one side by Tea roses and on the other by Chinas. These beds are planted with my new favorites—the Teas. Among them are MRS. B. R. CANT, MONSIEUR TILLIER, DUCHESSE DE BRABANT, ÉTOILE DE LYON, ROSE NABONNAND, FRANCIS DUBREUIL, and “PUERTO RICO”. Outstanding Chinas include OLD BLUSH, PINK PET, MUTABLI, LOUIS PHILLIPE, SLATER’S CRIMSON CHINA, HERMOSA, and ALICE HAMILTON.

Modern roses are planted in a long crescent-shaped bed that borders the third “room.” The “best of the bed” are Austin’s TESS OF THE D’URBERVILLES, Buck’s GOLDEN UNICORN, QUIETNESS, CAREFREE BEAUTY and EARTH SONG, EarthKind variety BELINDA’S DREAM, found rose “NATCHITOCHE NOISETTE”, and the very lovely LYDA ROSE.

The first rose to go in the ground was a Species rose native to Louisiana—*R. palustris*, the Swamp Rose. The bush was about 6 feet tall and wide, and miraculously it bloomed the same spring we moved it to its new home. A rose I find very interesting is “PETITE PINK SCOTCH”, with leaves as tiny as a pencil eraser and canes with the appearance of a fern. SEVEN SISTERS, MERMAID, LADY BANKS, VEILCHENBLEU and a very aggressive Mlle. Cécile Brunner toss their blooms into the air. FRAU KARL DRUSCHKI has found a new home in front of a gray brick fence. PERLE D’OR and EXCELLENZ VON SCHUBERT are the stars of the Polyantha garden. GARTENDIREKTOR OTTO LINNE, which welcomed all guests to our country garden, has a new home in the city.

Newcomers I am sentimental about are the Katrina survivor PEGGY MARTIN and the “NEW ORLEANS CEMETERY ROSE”, a found rose which appears to be a Bourbon. What’s missing from my new garden and certain to be added in the spring?—SOUVENIR DE LA MALMAISON, my all-time favorite variety. There is a bed of one dozen Hybrid Tea bushes. MARILYN WELLAN is the rose and this variety, as you might guess, is very special to me. I have come full circle.

MARILYN WELLAN completed a term as president of the American Rose Society (ARS) last fall; she was only the second woman in 115 years to serve in the position. Among her accomplishments as president, Marilyn is proud of her efforts to bring the HRF and the ARS together in areas where there are mutual interests. She is now happy to have more time for her new garden of more than 200 bushes, mostly old garden roses and Shrub roses, and for the ARS Library, Rose Hall, and the Gardens of the American Rose Center in Shreveport, Louisiana.



LEFT: Souvenir de la Malmaison.
BELOW: late winter with American Pillar.

